



Building an Award-winning Intranet

In early January of 2015 Poland's leading electricity producer, Tauron Group, was recognized for its intranet site in a competition organized by the Nielsen Norman Group (NN/g). Tauron's intranet was developed with SharePoint 2013 by IT-Dev, a renowned consulting company based in Poland. IT-Dev kindly accepted to share with us few impressions on developing such solution.



The objective of the competition organized by the Nielsen Norman Group (NN/g) was to select the best intranet designs in the world. "[Intranet Design Annual](#)" report has been published for 15 years and it is the most highly valued study of the functionality and usability of corporate portals globally.



Tauronet, as the TAURON Group's intranet is called, received an award from NN/g first of all for applying the best intranet design practices and its innovative approach to content management and information customization.

“It is a very important distinction to us and at the same time an incentive to keep working on the further development and improvement of our system. The TAURON Group employs about 25,000 staff today. This is why the intranet is one of the most essential and indispensable tools for internal communication in the company,” said **Pawel Gniadek**, Director of the Market Communication and PR Department, TAURON Polska Energia.

This wasn't an easy task because TAURON Group is comprised of many large enterprises. Also, most of these enterprises used separate intranets. With a view to determining the most important shortcomings of using those systems as well as the expectations regarding the new shared solution, precisely planned research and workshops were carried out prior to commencing the works.

“Before we began working on the project we wanted to identify the needs of the employees in all the companies of the TAURON Group. In the course of 10 workshops we met over 70 people representing various departments and specializations. We also conducted a survey in which over 2,500 employees participated, indicating the most vital functions and urgent needs. Again it turned out that research is crucial to the user-oriented design process, making it possible to prepare a system design with a definitely greater awareness,” said **Hubert Turaj**, UX Director at EDISONDA.

Based on the responses to the survey almost 300 mock-up intranets were constructed and subsequently turned into graphic designs. At this stage of the works close cooperation was important between the designers from EDISONDA and the consultants from IT-Dev, responsible for implementing the intranet in a manner ensuring the best match between the system usage patterns and SharePoint 2013 functions.

The new intranet was designed for over 16,500 users, working in 270 locations throughout Poland. The large number of users and the fact that they are part of highly diversified organisations ruled out the centralisation of editorial teams. On the other hand, it required adequate information management, preventing potential information chaos that might arise if content was edited by a number of independent editorial teams.

This is why at the next stage the architects from IT-Dev, based on UX recommendations, designed unique tools for content management so employees managing information from different organisational units are able to direct content, directly or indirectly, to users in the units they are in charge of. The editors at higher levels, in turn, may promote content created in the units reporting to them in order to expand its reach. The tools guaranteed that the permissions to publish and read content would be

allocated to the appropriate users – now and in the future, regardless of the changes in the organizational structure of the company.

*“This is a kind of a self-organizing content management process. It supports the corporate culture that draws on the diversity of its communities, while ensuring insight into and supervision over the compliance of local initiatives and actions with the corporate communication strategy and values. It worked perfectly in such a vast and diversified organisation as the TAURON Group as a tool for presenting various types of information – from news and internal regulations to project, programme and working group data,” said **Tomasz Szalaj**, CEO at IT-Dev.*

*“Apart from testing the supplied solution we spent the last months of the project works placing large amounts of content in Tauronet. We also decided to carry out a sequence of post-implementation system usability tests which enabled us to improve it and to guarantee a high level of user satisfaction,” said **Agnieszka Mical**, a Project Manager at Tauron.*

In the course of those tests we applied eye-tracking and conducted ethnographic research that consisted in monitoring and analyzing the activity of users performing routine system operation scenarios.

The result is a portal providing TAURON Group employees with transparent access to diverse information concerning them – both prepared locally and published at the central level. This prevents the flood of redundant information. At the same time the navigation to the relevant sections of the portal (e.g. HR, Finance, Law) brings the employees of those departments to the appropriate collaboration areas, while other users go to the publication area containing articles and documents from the given field.

Tauronet is also a document repository where employees may store and share documents, handle business issues and conduct projects. This enables the companies in the group to undertake joint projects, supply each other with services based on information exchange and efficient knowledge sharing.

*“The Nielsen Norman Group award proves that Polish companies are able to create innovative solutions on the global market. The implementation of Tauronet was a big challenge and a very rewarding experience both in complexity and scale of the project for all parties involved. With appropriate technologies and implementation process, worked out together with Edisona, we can implement similar projects for even the most demanding clients. In addition, as part of the Euvic Technology Group we have human potential that allows us to carry out many of projects of this type simultaneously,” said **Tomasz Szalaj**.*